

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my disappointment at the lack of informative television programming. I urge the FCC to take effective action so that voters can be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect our lives.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that voters have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices facing us.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

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Benjamin Mercer